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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: MIDDLE EAST: ANNAPOLIS PEACE CONFERENCE;  
SAO PAULO

"Seven Years Later"

Liberal, largest national circulation daily Folha de s. Paulo (11/28) editorialized: "The Middle East peace conference in Annapolis was little more than a photo opportunity. In objective terms, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas agreed only sit to discuss the problem. However, the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians was so damaged that even this first small agreement represents an advance.... The fact that 22 member nations of the Arab League have attended the meeting is also significant.... The presence of Syria, a nation that the US has accused of sponsoring terrorism, was especially praiseworthy. The simple fact that Damascus sent its vice prime minister to the meeting indicates a crack in the alliance between Syrians and Iranians. One of the summit's undeclared goals was to isolate Tehran, whose influence in the Middle East has been growing to the detriment of that of the US. A still untouched problem is that both Olmert and Abbas are weakened leaders, with low ability to negotiate concessions.... George W. Bush decided to call the conference to strengthen Abbas. The strategy worked out in this regard. For those who expected poor results from Annapolis, the conference was somewhat positive. But for those who hoped for concrete advances in the peace process, the result is frustrating."

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